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**Jazz Sells: Music Marketing and Meaning**

Mark Laver

New York, Routledge, 2015

ISBN: 978-1-138-01876-1 (£27.99 Paperback)

**Music in the Marketplace: A Social Economics Approach**

Samuel Cameroon

Abington, Routledge, 2015

ISBN: 978-0-415-72328-2 (£31.99 Paperback)

**Music and Capitalism: A History of the Present**

Timothy D. Taylor

Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2016

ISBN: 978-0-226-31197-5 (£21.00 Paperback)

The relationship between capitalism and cultural production is something that, at one level or another, all ethnomusicologists must take into account. Three recent monographs, Mark Laver's *Jazz Sells: Music Marketing and Meaning*, Samuel Cameroon's *Music in the Marketplace: A Social Economics Approach* and Tim Taylor's *Music and Capitalism: A History of the Present* all contribute in different ways to a growing body of research in this area. Although each deals primarily with a western context (Canada, the UK, and the United States, respectively), their ideas, approaches and conclusions are widely applicable.

*Jazz Sells: Music Marketing and Meaning*

Jazz carries strong associations with sexuality, race and nationalism. It has been used symbolically by a variety of movements, from the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century moral outrages published in *Ladies Home Journal*, to the beat-era writings of Jack Kerouac and Amiri Baraka, to political projects of the U.S. State Department. More symbolic baggage has accrued as it has move from the status of a popular music to art music, all of which comes to bear in advertiser's attempts to use the music in advertising.

Mark Lave analyses the use of jazz in (and as) advertising as both text and practice. Both an academic and an accomplished jazz saxophonist, he showcases both his culture- and music-theory chops throughout, providing nuanced readings of advertising semiotics within a framework influenced by Hall's concept of articulation, a modified version of Debord's spectacle and Althusser's concept of interpellation. Lave convincingly argues that although the relationship between jazz and consumer culture has traditionally been seen as oppositional, the relationship is in fact more complex. Examples of the advertisements described throughout the book are usefully collected on the book's website: *jazzsells.com*.

After outlining the theoretical framework and methodology in chapter one, chapter two introduces the book's main themes – gender, race, authenticity and consumer capitalism – through an exploration of Charles Mingus' vexed relationship with the

culture industries. Mingus was famous for his rants against commercialism, and was especially critical of the racist economics of the music industry. However, Mingus at times controversially espoused chauvinism and a 'black machismo'. For example, in his 1971 *Beneath the Underdog*, he repeatedly used pimps and prostitutes as metaphors for actors in the music industry, concluding that it is better to be the former than the latter. As Lave points out, Mingus used this controversy to improve his finances and enhance his mythology, thus occupying the positions of both anti-capitalist and entrepreneur that are in fact complimentary in late-capitalism.

Chapters three through five delve into the themes outlined in the previous chapter through three in-depth case studies. Chapter three explores jazz as a signifier in American culture through its pairing with another American icon – the automobile. Lave suggests that the twin mythologies of jazz and the automobile have been linked in journalism, literature and advertising since the 1920s. For example, F. Scott Fitzgerald's use of jazz as the soundtrack to the hit-and-run scene in *The Great Gatsby* is illustrative of association of jazz with the acceleration of industrial life typified by assembly lines of Ford and General Motors in the early twentieth-century. By the 1950s, the automobile symbolized (and facilitated) an idealized suburban lifestyle. Significantly, this lifestyle was distinctly Euro-American in its presentation. The exclusion of African American music and musicians in advertising reflected the tendency to automobile industry to ignore African Americans as a consumer group, which in turn reflected the social situation in the mid-century America where consumption was seen as (at least symbolically) participation in society. A half-century has seen dramatic changes in America's sexual, gender and racial politics, as well as jazz's transformation into primarily an art music. Lave explores this through Chrysler's use of Diana Krall as a spokesperson. In the collaboration of Chrysler and Krall, jazz signifies elegance and sophistication, yet, as Lave points out, it still carries sexual and racial baggage accrued throughout the twentieth century.

Perhaps the only product more symbolic of American culture than the automobile is cola. It is appropriate, then, that chapter four continues to explore the intersections of sexuality, gender, race and commerce through Pepsi *Jazz*, a limited edition flavour released by the Pepsi Cola Company in 2006. Here, Lave is primarily concerned with two things; First, Pepsi's use of jazz to signify the ethnic and cultural diversity of its brand and, second, the symbolic construction of improvisation-as-agency that plays into the consumerist discourse of 'choice'. Lave first describes the development of the Pepsi *Jazz* brand through interviews with those responsible for the campaign. Pepsi wanted consumers to experience a 'jazz moment'. While the exact nature of this moment was never clearly defined, it was meant to appeal to Pepsi's target demographic, someone on the 'lower end of the 24-54 age bracket' (154). What is telling about this ad is the actor chosen for the spot: a young woman of mixed-race descent who could be interpreted by viewers as Hispanic, African-American or Euro-American. In contrast to automobile manufactures in the mid-twentieth century that ignored (or actively disenfranchised) African-American consumers, capitalism today courts every market. This arguably promotes more equal societal participation, but that idea is premised on the notion that participation in American society comes via consumption. Hence, in the last part of this chapter, Lave questions the idea of agency that underpin neoliberal capitalism and that the improvisatory associations of jazz were used to connote in the Pepsi *Jazz* campaign.

The goal of brands is to become part of cultural production. In the final chapter, Lave revisits the tension between art and commerce pointed to in chapter two through an analysis of the Canadian Bank TD's sponsorship of jazz festivals. In the first part of the chapter, Lave discusses the use of sponsorship as an advertising strategy. He then discusses how TD positions itself as Canada's 'Bank of Music', marrying jazz signifiers with its own image in a reciprocal relationship; on the one hand, the jazz festival connotes the 'comfort' brand positioning, engagement with community, commitment to diversity and promotion of artistic excellence that TD wants consumers to associate with its brand. On the other hand, TD's desire to control its brand image affects the ways in which the festival is presented and experienced. Drawing on Žižek's notions of spectacle and ideology, Lave argues that every festival stakeholder 'is complicit in affirming and perpetuating the capitalistic and consumptive ideologies and practices that undergird the spectacular jazz festival communities' (179).

Lave concludes by reflecting on the emancipatory potential of improvisation. Is it possible that that, in the Attalian sense (1985), improvisation might offer an alternative to the hegemony of capital? Or is the idea of improvisation merely packaged and sold to us as we 'confuse the spectacle of expressive freedom with the genuine article' (235)? I wonder how Charles Mingus would have answered that question.

### *Music in the Marketplace: A Social Economics Approach*

Samuel Cameron, author of *Music in the Marketplace: A Social Economics Approach*, would probably argue for the later view of the above question. Indeed, his Introduction acerbically notes that the almost universal praise for Jacques Attali's (1985) treatment of music as a revolutionary harbinger of change 'may be due to it not having been read by those who would be horrified by its contents' (3). Cameron's book can be read as a companion book to Lave's; it also focuses the confluence of age, gender, race and commerce in the music industry but from the point of view of Economics. What is most useful about this book is that it is unflinchingly iconoclastic; Cameron's main goal is to debunk the many 'folk theories' that are trotted out to explain the social and economic state of the music industry – theories that the uncritical ethnomusicologist might be tempted to reproduce in his or her research. Cameron's book is a grab bag of theoretical models, but his chapters generally proceed from a neo-classical micro- or macro- economic analysis to more socially embedded theories. The sheer number of examples and perspectives he offers (as well as some of the mathematical formulas) can be overwhelming at first, but once one gets used to his style the book is quite accessible, and provides a rich picture of just how fraught analysis of the economics of music really is.

Cameron structures his book in three sections. The first section, chapters two through four, is devoted to revealing how almost every attempt to understand 'success' in the music industry is doomed to failure; the data is incomplete and, even if it were otherwise, it can be interpreted myriad ways. Chapters five and six are devoted to the production and consumption of music. It quickly becomes clear that even the terms 'production' and 'consumption' are fraught. The third section, chapters seven through nine, cover what we might call the 'social' aspects of the economics of music –

namely age, gender, and race and ethnicity. How this all works in the global economic system is brought together in a chapter on international trade.

Like Lave, Cameron frames the issues he addresses in his book with a case study of musician; this time the British star Adele. Adele has achieved massive popularity and sales despite being the antithesis of a 'typical' pop star; for Cameron, she embodies many of the dichotomies that vex industry executives looking for the 'magic formula'; she is a white British woman singing what is ostensibly a black American music; she is not an ex-member of a successful girl group; she is not an ex-contestant on a talent show; and she is not signed to a major label. The magic formula doesn't seem to lie in a musicological analysis either. For example, the emotional impact of Adele's songs is often posited as part of her success. Cameron sites a 2012 *Wall Street Journal* article that claims that a study linking an octave jump in Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 23 (K. 488) to an emotional reaction proves emotion is the key to the popularity of Adele's work. Yet he notes that, beyond the fact that the study didn't take other musical elements such as rhythm into consideration, it didn't use Adele's work. This is just one of many examples of the kind of guesswork that Cameron argues dominates the music industry's search for 'the next big thing'. He continues this trajectory in chapter three, provocatively titled 'The never ending death of music', debunking several folk theories explaining the perpetual state of crisis of the music industry. These include the fragmentation of genres, the poor quality of music and the 'death of consumption' in the digital age. While these answers might be intuitive, the data does not support the rhetoric. The title of chapter four therefore asks: 'Does anyone know anything about anything?' The answer, it would seem, is 'no'; because analysts tend to misrepresent facts or make 'lay' statistical inferences, the very nature of knowledge in the music marketplace is questionable. This, I think, is something we as ethnomusicologists would do well to remember.

Chapters five and six are devoted to the production and consumption of music. In both chapters, Cameron begins with mainstream neoclassical economic approaches, gradually moving to more socially embedded forms of analysis. It quickly becomes clear that even the terms 'production' and 'consumption' are fraught. Mainstream neoclassical economics rests on the assumption that the marketplace can generate a harmonious outcome that benefits both the musician and those who seek to monetize music. However, this assumption hints at the problem: the pursuit of 'Art' and 'Commerce' may conflict. Further problems present themselves on the consumption side of the equation. A perfect economic model would account for all of the factors that influence the consumption of music; but can you classify a very good cover band a 'Giffen good' (a very strong inferior good)? Is there a model that accounts for hearing loss in older consumers? Clearly, the music marketplace is far from harmonious.

Chapters six through eight consider demographic factors such as age, gender, and race and ethnicity in relation to the music marketplace. Market segmentation has been part of the music industry for quite some time, and it may be that the Internet has moved it past niches to individualization. Yet 'target markets' (especially the 'youth market') remain an obsession for music marketers. Cameron considers consumer demographics, but also helpfully looks at the effects of age, gender, and race and ethnicity from the production side. For example, consumers may attend fewer live events (now a major source of income for many musicians) as they age, but equally

the wear and tear of touring may take its toll on musicians (the Rolling Stones notwithstanding). What about gender? Cameron finds that, while women are strongly represented in musical activity overall, 'unconscious discrimination in early musical capital investments...limit[s] female performance in musical markets' (159). It seems that the music industry is still in the grip of white male hegemony, but as Cameron shows in the next chapter on race and ethnicity, it is difficult to pin down. The problem here is that almost all of the demographic work on race and ethnicity breaks down along a black/white dichotomy that is neither nuanced nor helpful. Again, the data simply doesn't tell us what is going on.

Cameron concludes with a pragmatism that is not often found in much of the writing on music and capitalism. He notes that, for better or worse, music capitalists are part of the economic fabric of the music industry. While the crowd-funded Internet is depicted as a place where 'a golden age of post-post capitalist utopianism where fans and music makers live together in perfect harmony with no evil business getting in between them' might be possible, it is more likely that they would only be replaced by Apple and Google (204). The 'improvisation' suggested by Lave can be found in the small players that focus on quality and not excessive profits; they can exist in any market system, in any era.

### *Music and Capitalism: A History of the Present*

The concerns addressed in both Lave's and Cameron's books dovetail nicely with Tim Taylor's *Music and Capitalism*, the latest addition to his impressive body of work on musical cultural production under neoliberal capitalism. Using a historically informed approach grounded firmly in Marx, Weber and Bourdieu, Taylor's book is wide-ranging but focused, nuanced and clearly articulated. Examples described throughout the book are usefully collected on the book's website: [musicandcapitalism.org](http://musicandcapitalism.org).

Throughout his book, Taylor emphasises that capitalism is neither uniform nor totalizing (although it is hegemonic) and, furthermore, one form of capitalism never completely replaces an earlier form; different modes of production and different regimes of value exist alongside each other. Chapter one therefore outlines the historical relationship between music and capitalism thematically rather than chronologically. Taylor's themes, which he builds upon in the following chapters, include the changing nature of music as a commodity, the production of cultural commodities, the ways concepts of artistic genius, social class and youth have undergirded the rise of cultural consumption, and how technological developments have factored into this. Taylor concludes his overview with an observation that nicely (if a bit worryingly) frames his project: capitalism is not total, 'yet hegemony is hegemony' (42).

Chapter two begins with a consideration of the changes in the dominant modes of production, distribution and consumption that have coincided with the ascendancy of neoliberal capitalism. Drawing on interviews with music industry workers, Taylor suggests that creative concerns are often overridden by profit motives. Because of this, the ideology of artist-as-genius that has for centuries underpinned the ability of musicians to make money has given way to an ideology of the star (or star-as-brand).

The commercialization of artistic concerns is part of a larger social milieu in which identity is made through the consumption of goods and social relationships are increasingly technologically mediated. Taylor concludes the chapter by noting that the opposition of Art and Commerce is – and always has been – a false dichotomy. What has changed, he suggests, is that the status of cultural commodities *as commodities* is more apparent under neoliberal capitalism, and their exchange value is more dominant.

Chapter three tackles globalization. Taylor is keen to remind us that globalization is a system of interconnectedness that has operated in many forms throughout history and, as with the forms of capitalism that travel through the system, those forms have tended to accrue rather than succeed each other in an orderly fashion. Today's globalization spreads the ideology and policies of neoliberalism through new communications technologies, albeit unevenly, and this is apparent in the international music industry. For Taylor, the 'genrefication' of World Music is illustrative of the broader shift in the way culture is conceived under neoliberal capitalism. He sees 'World Music' as a way that 'Western peoples put their Others in (small) boxes' (93). The need to do so, as evidenced by the rapid 'branding' of ideas like 'Celtic', is because those boxes can be easily exchanged as cultural commodities. Taylor uses his study of the Angelique Kidjo to argue that ideas of authenticity in World Music today, while perhaps more nuanced than in earlier times, still ultimately rest in the hegemonic Western colonialist imagination. Kidjo has made a successful career in music, but always in relation to an exoticism that stems from her identity as an African woman. Gender and race negotiations thus play out here similarly to the ways they do in both Lave's and Cameron's studies.

Chapter four considers the ways in which new digital technologies and practices are both products of, and help produce, neoliberal capitalism. While much has been made of the agency that digital technologies afford the 'DIY' musician, Taylor views this as a hegemonic trick of neoliberal capitalism. For example, while crowdfunding platforms such as Kickstarter might fund an artist's project in lieu of the backing of a label, Taylor notes that, in effect, the cost of production and marketing is outsourced to fans. Transactions on Kickstarter are not the gift-exchange they are posited to be, but obfuscated capitalist exchange. Moreover, while the rhetoric of the digital economy is one of the crowd, musicians in the digital economy are actually more and more left to fend for themselves. As with other fields, under neoliberal capitalism, 'efficiency' breeds more work. Taylor finds that musicians under neoliberal capitalism must work longer and harder than ever before to promote themselves, and that furthermore digital technologies have greatly depersonalized (or de-socialized) the musical production process.

Most of *Music and Capitalism* strikes a pessimistic tone: neoliberal capitalism is expanding into all aspects of life with no signs of abatement. In his final main chapter, though, Taylor attempts to find those who work at its fringes. Taylor presents Burger Records, a small Southern Californian label that produces everything primarily on hand-made cassettes. In its first few years, the label was run almost like a collective, producing small batches and requiring no contracts. Having attracted a tightly knit community of like-minded musicians, the label has grown, and so it has recently been forced to adopt some standard business practices. Yet its DIY, anti-capitalist ethos remains. Taylor concludes by noting that Burger's anti-capitalist mode of production

is its message, as is the non-economic regime of value it operates in. This finding seems to agree with Cameron's assertions. Despite this, one is left with the feeling that Burger's message is destined to be swallowed, or at least monetized, by the hegemony of the larger neoliberal capitalist environment that surrounds it.

Each of these books makes a valuable contribution to an emergent body of literature that includes that includes *As Heard on TV: Popular Music in Advertising* by Bethany Klein, *Music Markets and Consumption* by Daragh O'Reilly et. al, and *The Sounds of Capitalism* by Tim Taylor. All three books are appropriate for students, teachers and researchers. Read as a 'trilogy', they offer interesting counterpoints and congruencies that will enrich the reader's understanding of musical cultural production under neoliberalism.

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